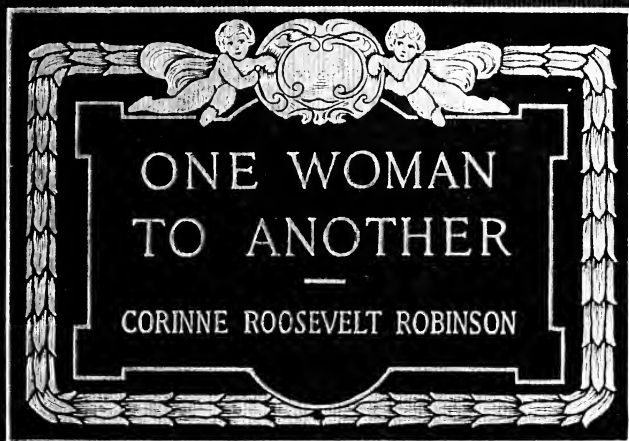
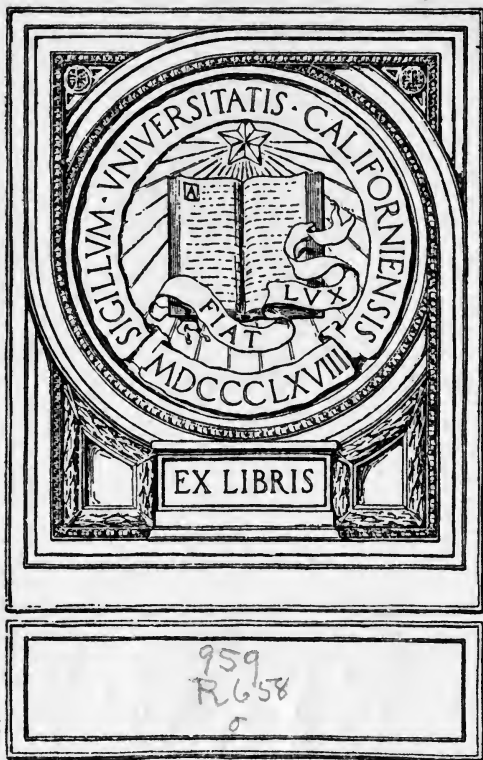


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ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CORINNE ROOSEVELT ROBINSON

AUTHOR OF "THE CALL OF BROTHERHOOD"

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1914

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TO
CORINNE ROBINSON ALSOP
MY DAUGHTER, MY FRIEND
MY VALUED CRITIC

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ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

YOU are the friend of all his early years;
He told me that the bond was strong and
close,
His comrade, his companion, even more,
For in your veins there flowed the same hot blood
That coursed in his,—your mothers, sisters,—born
In selfsame hour, linked by that close tie.
Thus were their children knit by call of flesh—
Often he told me that you never failed,
And that when others, with averted gaze,
Would have him know his own unworthiness,
Your eyes held only memories of the past
With hope for fairer future in their depths—
Loyal and loving in their tender blue,
Fit mirror for the loyal, loving heart.
Come with me, then, and stand beside him here;
How still he lies, who was in love with life!
Ah! yes, his face is sweet to look upon,

The restlessness is gone and all the lines
Are softened back once more to vanished youth,
And that strange look, so foreign to his heart,
Which came because his cruel enemy held
So fierce and firm a sway—it, too, is gone—
And so your tender kiss upon his brow
Falls on the face your childhood knew so well.
The last words that he spoke were all for you.
In fierce delirium his accents fell,
Murmuring with contentment “She will come”—
And now that you are here my bursting heart
Must pour out all its anguish, all its joy—
For joy there was, though now this bitter pain.
I was of that strange world you cannot know,
The “half-world” with its glamour and its glare,
Its sin and shame; where men, like ravening wolves,
Feed on the bodies and the souls of us
Who, either steeped in callous wickedness,
Or reckless with a dull and hopeless dread
Of cold and hunger and all bitter things,
Are willing, nay, are sometimes even glad,
To yield our outer selves for inner warmth.
And yet I shrank, for I was young,—so young—
And very simple, made for better things.
One night he came and looking in my face

He said: "You have a true and tender heart,
If you will come with me I'll shelter it,
For I am weary and athirst for love."
Thus, then, I went. At first I only knew
That I could eat until I had enough,
That I could sleep without the haunting thought
Of what the dreaded day was sure to bring;
But soon a great and mighty passion grew
O'erwhelming both my body and my soul
Because he was so very good to me—
Never a harsh or cruel word or deed,
And even when the fire filled his brain,
For me he only had the anguished look
That seemed to pray me to forgive him all.
You, who have never known the fierce, hot fumes
That rise and choke the very soul of man
And blur the tottering reason till it fall,
How can you judge of him, and how could she
Whose fair white bosom was a thought too chaste
To pillow a repentant weary head?
But I who knew the evil of the world
Could never shrink before so sad a thing;
My breast was ready for that burning brow,
My hands to clasp his hands, my lips to meet
His sad petitions that I hold him close.

And so the mother that is in us all
Joined with the love of woman unto man
And gave me strength to battle for his sake.
Only, when in his eyes I read the look
That longed for her, my swift resentment rose;
And sometimes when he stroked the soft fair coil
Of ash-gold hair that crowned my drooping head,
I almost flung the tender hand aside,
Because I knew he dreamed of other hair
That he had loved, when eyes as soft as mine
Smiled into his and pledged their marriage vow.
Then, sometimes, friends of his would come and
 speak
Of that fair world of yours, unknown to me,
And afterward he would be lost in gloom,
Or quick to let the Beast spring out and grip
His shattered being in relentless sway.
And sometimes they would whisper when they went
Saying, "Poor fellow, he will die some day
With boots on, in some cheap and drunken brawl."
Then I, who heard, did register a vow
That he I loved should never perish so.
Look at him now in fair and cleanly sheets,
The picture of his mother near his hand,
And all the darkened room as sweet and fresh

As was the memory of his mother's home;
For when he fell to-day, I heard the cry
And saw him lying, and I ran to lift
His fallen body from the cold hard stones;
With strange, undreamed of strength I bore him up
And laid him here, where, quick, with eager hands
I dragged the boots from off the weary feet
So that harsh prophecy should not come true,
While he was moaning like a little child
In wild delirium your very name.

* * * * *

And so I sent for you, and you have come,
Although too late to listen to his words,
Yet not too late to hear what I must say—
Surely, the Christ whose very name is love
Will hear me too, for long ago He said
Of that poor woman who had been like me:
“She has loved much, so much shall be forgiven.”
So now, perchance, my prayer for him I love
Will reach the far and heavenly mercy-seat
Where Christ, who waits with wide, condoning arms,
Shall welcome him because of what he did—
Because he taught me what a holy thing
Is human love, and by his gentleness
He saved my vagrant and despairing soul.

Then God, who is our Father, can but save
His erring soul by love that is divine—
What! you would kiss me? Yes, I take your kiss;
We are both women, and we both have loved!

COULD I FORGET ?

COULD I forget that I have held the best
Of this Earth's treasures in my fervent grasp—
Then should I be content to sadly clasp
The wreck of beauty, and my soul might rest !

But I, who thought I knew the perfect whole,
Must still remember that lost ecstasy,
And so this lesser thing you proffer me
But sets the seal of anguish on my soul !

IF I COULD PURGE MY LOVE

IF I could purge my love and make it pure
Of all except the essence of divine;
If I could turn to crystal flood its wine
And change to peace its passion and allure,
Then, like a holy flame in paths obscure,
Lift its translucent light and make it shine
A beacon to some other soul than mine,
Perchance I might my loneliness endure.
But I am weak and woman, and my heart
Falters before the last great sacrifice,
A stumbling-block to stay my ardent will;
And thus I must accept the lesser part
And try forever just to blind my eyes
Until my craven heart is cold and still.

JUGGERNAUT

THE love that I would banish from my heart
Has nothing for me now but bitter pain,
And yet it holds me and will not depart
Nor leave my tortured soul to peace again—
And all my brooding spirit cries to God,
Just, for one single hour to turn Time's wheel,
Remit the sentence, stay the righteous rod,
And all the beauty of the past reveal.
Let me once more believe that Love was deep,
Impregnable, unbartered for desire,
And I, who sowed the wind, would gladly reap
The burning whirlwind of its flaming fire,—
But, no! the adamantine wheels roll on,
And faith, and peace, and purity are gone!

IF YOU SHOULD CEASE TO LOVE ME

[F you should cease to love me, tell me so !
I could not bear to feel your ardent hand
That waked the chords of life to understand,
Hold mine less closely; no, Belovèd, no;
If you should cease to love me, tell me so !

If you should cease to love me, do not dare
To meet me with a masque of tenderness;
I could not stoop to suffer one caress
That any other had a right to share,—
If you should cease to love me, do not dare !

If you should cease to love me, do not fear—
I would not have you think I made one claim.
If your great love should pass, there is no blame;
For love grown cold, I would not shed a tear,—
If you should cease to love me, do not fear !

If you should cease to love me, let us part,
As friends who part for all eternity;
Let us make grave and reverent obsequy
For what was once our very soul and heart—
If you should cease to love me, let us part!

But while you love me, keep our hearts' deep faith
As some High Priest would guard the holy place;
Let me not see the shame upon your face
Of one unworthy of Love's vital breath,
So while you love me, keep our hearts' high faith!

Thus, if you cease to love me, save my soul
By having kept our love so pure and high
That if the time must come when it shall die,
I may retain my treasure fair and whole,—
If you should cease to love me,—save my soul!

“AND MEN SHALL KILL THAT
WHICH THEY LOVE”

“AND men shall kill that which they love!”
Alas! that I should prove
This sorry truth!
I, in whose eager youth,
Myself did dedicate
To true love’s high estate,—
That I should bring such dread and dire fate
Upon that, which to me
Stood with the Deity!

Yours was a spirit that had never quailed,
No matter how assailed,
Yours was a heart
That would have borne the dart
Of each indignity
That had not come from me,
Nor bowed a vanquished head.
But now I see

That spirit faint and dead,
Because I failed
In fine fidelity!

I cannot make it true
That I have so killed you,
That my strong arm,
Which longed to guard you safe from every harm,
Has been the weapon that has dealt the blow
Which lays you low,—
That my weak Faith
Has done you unto Death!

I had not thought to yield
To any man my right to stand as one
Who wooed the fiercest rays of Truth's hot sun
To break upon my shield.
And yet—
After long years of such liege loyalty,
With wild regret
I pay the sad arrears
Of bartered Faith's decree.

And you—
That which I loved and killed—

Your anguish now is stilled.
You, who once knew the gleam of perfect things,
You, who were wafted high on Love's strong wings,
Now fallen to earth by sudden heaviness,—
What torture to the one who struck the blow
That he should know
That you, so silent now, feel no distress—
Dead of Love's littleness!

FORFEIT

MUST there be forfeit of such gift and grace
That we should hear this faint and feeble cry,
And see frail fingers searching helplessly
The frigid marble of the mother's face,
As though to claim a loved and lost embrace?
Is there no answer to the fierce, blank "Why?"
That springs unto our lips resentfully
Until they may not frame or prayer or praise?
Would life be fairer could we understand
The law immutable of sacrifice,
That we must lose to gain, must pay the toll
Even of death? If we could see God's hand
Perchance our forfeit were a petty price
Before the wonder that He shall unroll!

MIRIAM, "LOVED OF GOD"

MIRIAM, "Loved of God," my little child,
I anguished so that thou mightst come to me,
And now my being bleeds as poignantly,
My mother's heart can scarce be reconciled
That God has called thee, pure and undefiled,
Back to His presence. It would seem that He,
Miriam, "Loved of God," had need of thee.
Yet I can still rejoice that thou hast smiled
And lived to bless me for this fleeting hour,
For in my soul has grown the wondrous power
Of perfect motherhood, the one sublime
And stainless passion of the human heart,
And though our God has willed that we should part,
I am a mother to the end of time!

FROM A MOTOR IN MAY

THE leaves of Autumn and the buds of Spring
Meet and commingle on our winding way—
And we, who glide into the heart of May,
Sense in our souls a sudden quivering.
What though the flash of blue or scarlet wing
Bid us forget the night in dawning day,
Skies of November, sullen, sad, and gray,
Once hung above this withered covering.
There is no Spring that Autumn has not known,
Nor any Autumn Spring has not divined,—
The odor of dead flowers on the wind
Shall but enrich a fairer blossoming,
And though they shiver from a breeze outblown,
The leaves of Autumn guard the buds of Spring.

SPRING ON THE MOUNTAIN

LOVE of mine, come climb the height
Far beyond the thirsty plain,
There we'll find our lost delight,
There the Spring is born again!
High above this dreamy dell
Where her first-born flowers fade
We shall see her in the spell
Of her coming. In the glade

Where the balsam branches spread
Shadows o'er the deeper blue
Of the violets we thought dead,
There the bellwort's golden hue
Rivals still the sunlight's gleam,—
Come! my heart is wild and gay
With the glory of the dream
Of a reincarnate May!

Love of mine, I cannot wait,
For our joy attends, aloof—
Let us go with hearts elate
There to put it to the proof.
What if, as we meet the Spring
Evanescent, frail and fair,
Swift, on its elusive wing,
Our lost youth should greet us there!

SONNET TO A SATYR

LINES WRITTEN FOR A FIGURE CARVED BY PHILIP
SMITH

WILD creature of the woods whose merry
hoof
Has trampled many a fine and tender blade
Amid the forest where remote, aloof,
Thou sportest in nymph-haunted sylvan glade.
Anon, with reed against thy mirthful lips,
Pan's music thou evokest, shrill and clear,
Until the flying bird, affrighted, dips
Her far spread wings that she may pause and hear
What message she may find of swift alarm
In your quick note; but soon again she sweeps
The broad horizon without thought of harm,
Seeing thee lie there while Dame Nature keeps
Her tender watch above thy graceful rest,
Holding thy form against her loving breast.

RUNNING IN THE RYE

THERE'S a boy, a little fellow,
And he's running in the rye—
Tumbled hair with tints of yellow,
And the color of the sky
Shining in the starry wonder of his deep and dreamy
eye.

How he races, as he chases
First a gleaming butterfly,
Swift to follow then a swallow—
Dipping, floating, sailing by,
Skimming o'er the brimming billows of the un-
dulating rye!

He is Spring-time, he is sing-time,
And the joy that grief has slain
Wells within me like a torrent
Till it purges me of pain—
And the passion that I bear him
Floods my heart with youth again!

BOB WHITE

I HAVE stumbled in the stubble,
I have lingered in the lane,
I have taken every trouble
Just to hear your voice again,
For I want to see you closer,
Though I'm sure that you are plain!

Now I know just how a lover
Feels about a "hot pursuit."
It was broiling in the clover,
And I could have been a brute
If I only might have found you,
But you suddenly were mute!

After singing all the morning—
Sometimes late into the night—
When I follow—without warning
Then you take to shameless flight,
For I never, never find you,
Most elusive Robert White!

You're delusive, Mr. Bobby—
That is why I like you so.
You're intrusive, that's your hobby,
Or at least you strike me so—
You're exclusive and so snobby,
All your traits are poor, I know.

Yet I stumble in the stubble,
And I linger in the lane.
Pray, why do I take such trouble
When I hear your note again?
For I know that if I found you
I should think you very plain!

JUNE ON THE MOUNTAIN

THERE'S a rhododendron thicket
Where the Laurel River flows,
Shining leaf and gleaming blossom,
Pearly white and radiant rose,
Shading deep, and ever deeper
Where the richer purple glows.

June is waning on the mountain,
And the kalmia's petals fall,
But the rhododendron thicket
Rises like a glistening wall—
Twining, blinding all our pathway
Under hemlocks straight and tall.

As the sun sinks over Round Top,
All the glittering bud and bloom
Seem to vanish in the shadow
Of the valley's sudden gloom—
Winds amid the pines primeval
Shiver with the summer's doom!

INDIAN SUMMER

FAIR fallacy of Nature whose pale skies
Would cheat us with a mockery of Spring,
As though behind them undiscovered lies
The great renewal,—Indian Summer,—bring
Back to my heart the glory that was June,
Before the withered bud, the fallen leaf.
Mirage of Autumn hours—I commune
Once more with joy's fulfilment in the brief
Sweet ecstasy that you afford the heart.
I yield in acquiescence, lulled by scent
Wafted from breezes that have played their part
In softer moments; now, alas! but lent
By Nature in a garment of disguise
To blind, with sweets foregone, my willing eyes.

A F R A G M E N T

O H! quiet hour of happy vagrancy!
To float upon the river's tranquil breast,
Content to lie and watch how aimlessly
It follows its meandering, random quest
Through meadows where the noontide's drowsy
hush
Is only quickened by a sylvan thrush.

Apart, as though in some far golden dream,
I lie and muse; with indolent delight
I catch the shadows where the lilies gleam
In serried rows of yellow and of white,
And wonder that the world is so in tune—
Till I remember you are here,—and June!

BY AN OPEN WINDOW IN CHURCH

I HEAR the music of the murmuring breeze,
It mingles with the preacher's quiet word;
Dim, holy memories are waked and stirred,
I seem to touch once more my mother's knees.
Christ's human love, His spirit mysteries
Envelop me. It is as though I heard
An angel choir in the singing bird
That floats above the fair full-foliaged trees.
The old sweet Faith is singing in my breast
With peace in Nature's summer subtly blent,
All of my being breathes a deep content—
Life and its unremitting, baffled quest
Fade into this rich sense of perfect rest—
My soul, renewed, is steeped in sacrament.

MOUNT BALSAM

I STAND upon the heights beneath the blue,
Wide, sunlit spaces of a sky, cloud-torn.
Below, far ranges on my vision dawn,
Transfused in soft and amethystine hue.
I feel, perchance, as some great god would do
At the first break of an Olympian morn,
When to his primal senses freshly borne,
He caught the wonder of the world he knew.
So might Apollo thrill, when flying rein
And fiery chariot flung the day outspread;
Thus Proserpine, as all the fields of grain
Blossomed beneath her cool, creative tread;
Or Jupiter, with joy that stabbed like pain,
Looked in the eyes of Juno, newly wed!

THE METROPOLITAN TOWER FROM ORANGE MOUNTAIN

AN oval opal, shining in the mist,
Set amid battlements which, like a dream,
Some fairy palace guarding close would seem.
Shot through with azure and with amethyst,
You rise a beacon, by the breezes kissed,
Forever beckoning, wooing, as the gleam
In longing eyes that wait at some dear tryst.
Like a mirage in fever-fetid lands
Luring the traveller from the heat accursed,
You seem a magic thing not built with hands,
But moulded to allay our vision's thirst.
Above the sullen city's sordid slime
You point us upward to the far sublime!

LINES TO A FRIEND ON
PARTING AFTER SIX
WEEKS IN INDIA

DEAR fellow-traveller, pleasant friend;
'Tis sad we near our journey's end,
And now the "parting of the ways"
Hangs like a pall upon our days—
An "Indian Summer" we have spent
With which the winter weeks have blent
Until we really hardly knew
Which season 'twas; for skies so blue
Have crowned so many charming hours
It surely was the "time of flowers."
Please don't forget your comrade when
The busy world shall claim you, then
A special loyalty 'twould be
To give a wandering thought to me,—
A train of thought just send my way
As long as up to Mandalay!

Remember Ahmedabad's procession
Where we were seized by an obsession
For Hindu weddings; wreathed in flowers
We whiled away the twilight hours—
And Udaipur! ah! fairy palace,
A "wonderland" where many an "Alice"
Might lose her way in happy dreaming,
And soon forget to *be*, in seeming!
Oh! silent cranes that fly to rest
Above the water's placid breast,
And light that flushes as it closes
And turns the sky to ash of roses,—
Full long, in memory's amber pressed,
Will dwell that scene I love the best.
Then Chitore's towers of Victory
Against a dark and murky sky,
They dominate the long-dead past,
And teach us Beauty's worth at last.
From Delhi and from Agra, too,
We learn that Art and Love are true;
We prayed before the Taj Mahal
That stands a living seneschal,
To guard a love that cannot die
For love outlives all history.
And once again our souls replied

When Sunrise on its crimson tide
Swept over Kinchinjunga's height
And bade the day destroy the night!

It seems to me when we respond
To sights like these, a subtle bond
Is forged,—and never heart from heart
Can after such a union part—
And so though oceans roll between
We're ever linked in what has been—
“Es ist so schön gewesen,” Friend,
That such a tie can never end!

THE FUTURE OF CHIVALRY

LINES READ AT A DEBATE

WHAT shall become of Chivalry?
The very word spells Arcady—
And visions o'er my fancy play
Of those brave knights of yesterday!
Launcelot and Bors and young Gawaine
Go tilting through the woods again,
The shadowy woods where lutes were strung
And love-knots from the branches hung;
Where lovely maiden in distress,
Soft shielded by her loveliness
Had but to call to any swain
To rescue her from any pain.
The modern Launcelot, half a knight,
Perchance might leave her to her plight.
While modern Bors is spelled with "e,"
There were no bores in Arcady!
And modern Gawaine, worst of all,—

Is only summoned when things pall,
And then, alas! for him—poor swain—
His name—dismembered—spells but *gain*!
And so, alack-a-day! Ah, me!
What shall become of Chivalry?

Fair Woman, we must turn to you—
(In any stress we always do)
The future of this gracious art,
Lies only in your subtle heart,
And would you not confess it lost,
Just pause awhile and count the cost.
Through you alone it must survive,
Man cannot keep this hope alive—
Dear Chivalry, a beggar, prays
That you should save him from disgrace,
That you should in his cause enlist,
Though Suffragette, or Suffragist.—
Forget there is a Bernard Shaw—
Or “Self-expression”—new-made law—
Forget Eugenics, put aside
The many modern fads allied,
“Sex problems” of biology,

And all the strange doxology
That rings with every ill and ism
That color Life's illusive prism.
If you would keep your old-time place
Call back the half-forgotten grace
That haloed love, and hallowed life,
And made the game seem worth the strife—
And put aside the fallacy
That one can be one's *own* "per se."
One's life can never be one's own,
Too strong the grasp, too deep the groan
Of other lives that grip the soul
And stand between us and our goal;
For life is like a giant tree
That stretches up right valiantly,
But every branch must brush another,
And every tendril bind a brother!
So, would you keep fair Chivalry,
Don't crush it by your "right to be
Just your own self"—Put "Self-expression"
Away with "Cubes" and "Post-impression."
Give heart, and soul, and love a chance,
And happiness, with song and dance

And praise and prayer and gracious things,
That lift us from the earth on wings.
Oh, Woman, give us back our right
To simple things of deep delight.
Just *be* a woman, if you can,
And Chivalry 'll come back to man!

VERA CRUZ

THEY called for the Youth of the nation,
And swift at the call,
Marines and the Middies were ready
To fight and to fall.

They dreamed of a past that was glory,
And glory to be,
Of a flag that was waving in triumph
On land and on sea.

No war! But a mother is weeping,
A father grown old—
No war! But a harvest is reaping
Of hearts that are cold.

No war! But the Country was calling
And theirs not to choose,
The North and the South had their heroes,
And so—Vera Cruz!

TO FORBES ROBERTSON, AS
HAMLET

INTERPRETER of mighty moods and men,
Creator of a Hamlet so supreme,
Shakespeare's incarnate thought is born again
To shape us Life—the substance and the dream.
And yet thy very Hamlet falsifies
His own sad words. Imperious Cæsar's clay
May stop a hole, but Cæsar's will denies
The earth, the ages, and their brief decay.
The immemorial cycles count him great,
Just as forever from the wheel of Fame,
Each revolution shall but dedicate
Another spark to thy immortal name.
“The rest is silence.”—Words may not impart
The majesty and magic of thy art.

“ABSENT THEE FROM FELICITY
AWHILE”

TO J. S. E.

“ABSENT thee from felicity awhile”—
Your voice, sonorous, lingers on the line,
I see the tender ardor of your smile
And meet your eyes that claim the thought in
mine.

’Twould seem you answer only to the sound
Of Shakespeare’s melody, your smile and eyes
Though lit with depth of meaning, have not found
The desolation that half hidden lies
Beneath the genius of the perfect word;
But I, being woman, not alone to art,
But to the world’s great loneliness am stirred,
Conscious of all the emptiness of heart
That I shall feel when you no more for me
With loyal love can make felicity!

THE POET

THE Poet should be one who sings,
Whose rhythmic music lilts and rings
With images inspired;
And he must be the Seer who sees
Beyond his utmost melodies,
Until, with soul afired,
He brings the waiting world the word
That only Seer and Singer heard!

HOSTAGE

LIFE, wilt thou wait awhile
And let me smile?
Before the stress and turmoil have begun,
Grant me one hour,
One hour of golden dalliance in the sun,
The fair, sole dower
To hold forever close against my breast,
And so forever rest
In happy knowledge that joy has been mine;
That in my veins like wine
Has run the glamour of the sunlight's glow;
That winds so soft and low
Have brought me fragrance of the distant brine,
Or honey-sweet amid the Spring-touched trees
Have swept the scent of these
Unto my eager senses, till I seem
A part of my own dream,
My dream of youth
And nature's flowering,
Life, let me sing!

Wilt thou not stand aside

Until with all the fair world's gifts allied
I shall have armor of delight to bring

Against the fierce, hot sting
Of thine assault when that dread day shall come?

I promise thee, O Life, I shall be dumb,
Nor utter one reproach, if only now

I may go forth with gay uplifted brow
And meet my golden hour of happy fate—
Life, wilt thou wait?

I am no coward—when the trumpet calls,
Valiant, my feet shall climb the crumbling
walls,

My breast be bared to hail of shot and shell;
But now, while all is well,

Let me hold fast

To this sweet hour that it shall ever last,
A hostage for the future and the fight

Thus when the darkness comes and clash of
arms

And all my soul is sick with fierce alarms,
The healing light,

The peace of what has been,
Shall guide me through the din,

And pledge me promise of what is to be;
Thus may I see
My happy hour once more restored to me,
Transfigured, dim, perchance, yet glorified
Although with Death allied!
So be it, then—if now,
Stern Life, if thou
Wilt wait a little while,
And let me smile!

THE NIGHT BEFORE

WHY should I linger in these cramping walls
And yield my being to their dull constraint?
Why should I bow before this dread disease
That creeps so slowly through my languid limbs
That it may never reach my burning heart
Before it kills the fire of my brain,
And leaves me with half-blurred, unseeing eyes?
Surely no gracious God has so decreed,
No God whose name is Love. Love could not work
For the belovèd such a dire fate—
To meet the impotence of yielding flesh,
To feel the flickering of waning sense,
And yet, to know that years unending stretch
In dim succession ere all life decay.
I am no coward—I could bear even that,
If, by my living, I could ease one pain
Of one I love, or shield a single heart
To whom I owe a crumb of fealty.
But in the watches of the long black night

I take account of each and every one,
And can but see them better for the deed
Which I do purpose ere another dawn.
They who are young can have no need of me,
For what has youth to do with such as I?
Youth with its splendid, gay inconsequence—
Its laughter in the very eyes of fate,
Its daring in the face of destiny—
Youth reaches for the glove that Life throws
 down
And, smiling, flings it back with unconcern.
I know, for I, too, picked the gauntlet up,
Although my youth was riddled through with
 age—
The premature, sad age that comes with care,
And cruel disillusion with a world
That turns a cheap, inglorious, shallow cheek
To many a valiant and resentful heart.

Why should we dread this door that we call Death—
'Tis but the other end of Life, we know—
Birth at one end, we may not understand,
Death at the other end, unfathomed too—
Why should we fear to meet it, when our day
Of use in this strange world is past and gone?

I read of one who in the Antarctic cold
Wandered apart to die, because he felt
Himself a hindrance rather than a help,
With weight of sickness and of suffering—
And all the world cried, “Gallant, selfless one!”
And yet, because I lie within four walls
I may be deemed a coward, though my heart
Has struggled long, to choose the nobler way—
I, too, am selfless, nor will courage fail—
Full armored then, I greet my comrade, Death!

LIFE, A QUESTION?

LIFE? and worth living?

Yes, with each part of us—

Hurt of us, help of us, hope of us, heart of us,

Life is worth living.

Ah! with the whole of us,

Will of us, brain of us, senses and soul of us.

Is life worth living?

Aye, with the best of us,

Heights of us, depths of us,—

Life is the test of us!

SOLUTION

I ASKED you if you loved me as of old,
And in your eyes I read a questioning,
As though you feared your ardor had grown cold,
And Love no more were such a wondrous thing;
But even as I searched that look, my own
Reached to the vision you have never known.

And so, through all your doubt, my seeing soul
Smiled, for it knew you could not fathom love,
For none have scaled the heights nor dreamed the
whole,
Till Death's blank silence comes the test to prove—
Had I not met its echoless despair,
How could I know that your deep love was there?

But I have walked with that grim comrade, Pain,
And yearned with baffled longing for a word
That lips, once joyous, may not speak again

To happy ears that knew not what they heard—
I, who have anguished through the endless night,
Can measure all your love for me aright!

And so I know if I should pass away,
The question in your eyes would pass with me;
If I should die before another day,
Your heart would bleed for mine as poignantly
As though we had been severed in the Spring
Of our great passion's pregnant blossoming.

Death shall interpret what Life may not see,
And eyes that bless our own with love and laughter
Are only fully prized when mystery
Curtains the present from the dim hereafter.
What fruitless, fond assurance you would give,
If I were dead, and words could make me live!

A KENTUCKY GRAVE

THERE lies a lonely grave beneath tall trees
In that fair State where birds afire flash
Above the azure-purpled waves of grass.
Upon the nameless stone is but a date,
Mid-June, when all Kentucky's loveliness
Was at its full, and on a year before
The cruel war had ravaged the sweet South.
But though no word is on the barren stone,
The legend runs that one both fair and young—
Ah! passing fair and brimmed with eager youth—
Lies cold and still and nameless 'neath the sod.
For in that year the old-time hostelry,
That still stands by the mound where she is laid,
Was gay with dance, and song, and revelry,
And all the Blue Grass State had gathered there
As they were wont to do in other days.
On that warm mid-June night, all suddenly,
She stood within the hall, while her dark maid
With coal-black hands unloosed the fleecy cloak,
And every eye was drawn unto the gleam

Of jewels at her waist and round her throat
That seemed a lily, dew-dropped in the dawn.
Her strange dark eyes were flashing jewels, too,
Set in the pallor of her dreamy face
That turned to one as though his life was hers.
Now, as the rhythmic music of the dance
Fell on her ears, her eyes sought his and sank
Into their depths as one who drowning steep
His failing memory in things best loved—
Then slowly to the soft and sensuous sound
Of flute and viol and of violin,
They floated in a circled harmony;
And in her eyes one saw the love that leaned
And lavished everything, and on her lips
An evanescent smile that came and went.
She seemed a pure white flame of loveliness!
* * * * * * * *
The music ceased, and as the last sweet note
Wafted away to star-lit depths of June,
She sank, and swooned in sinking, to the floor
And died, without a murmur, in his arms.
They laid her on a snow-white couch, and left
Her weeping woman crouching at her feet,
And her dark lover kneeling with her hand—
Listless as lily when the dew is gone—

Clasped in his own to watch the weary night.
But when the dawn broke, lo! they found her there
In utter loneliness, for both had fled!
So runs the story—none have ever heard
More than these lines have told, and thus the stone
Bears nothing on it but the lonely date,
And all who come must listen to the tale.

* * * * *

One, learning of the legend, lays a rose
Upon the mound and leaves the gift of tears
To keep its petals fresh, because of grief
That one so young should perish ere the bud
Had fully flowered in its blossoming.
Ah, happy heart that weeps at such a fate!

But still another comes, with laggard step
And eyes opaque from disillusion's blow,
Whose lips once long ago knew laughter well,
Now parched with pallid parody of mirth
And curved with scorn that any pity one
Who never can know aught but Youth and Faith—
Ah, bitter heart that smiles at such a fate!

And we who ponder on the twice-told tale,
Shall we then laugh, or weep, or turn aside,

Perchance, and envy her? Had she not lived—
She who had loved, and danced, and dreamed, and
died,
Like some resplendent butterfly that wings
To immortality in one brief hour!

LOVE IS A TALENT

LOVE is a talent, like the gift of song
That thrills its cadenced passion on the ear,
So Love, with harmony as rich and clear
Strikes on the chord of Life, a vibrant, strong,
Full note, that turns to right the cruel wrong,
That lifts the lonely, stills the starting tear,
Heals the bruised heart and casteth out all fear
With peace that only can to Love belong.

But if the singer sing not, then the high,
Sweet resonance shall harsh and tuneless fall—
Thus Love, if only garnered and not given,
Of its own atrophy must droop and die—
The dowered of Love must lean and lavish all
Their boon on Earth, their Sesame to Heaven!

IF I WERE NOT SO YOUNG

IF I were not so young, the vistaed years
Had not for me such pale, perspective dread,
For I could turn, beneath this veil of tears,
To swift reunion with my longed-for Dead—
But Youth is mine, and all its baffled fires
Burn fiercely on within my ravaged breast,
And all its ardent, innocent desires
Defiant still their heritage attest.
My blurred, blank gaze that once was wont to
shine
With prescient glow in what fair Time should
bring,
Now scans Life's far and faint horizon line
Knowing that Death alone shall hold no sting—
My dumb despair, when it can find a tongue,
May only falter, "Were I not so young!"

LOVE'S ARREARS

I WAS in love with life and then I died—
Because I lost the thing that I loved best.
In my embittered soul with arid zest
Sad disillusion, with fierce hate allied,
Battled with murdered love and wounded pride;
And harsh resentment, harbored in my breast,
Festered the wound in my dead soul, till Rest
Even the Rest of Death could not abide.
My holier self in grief unholy lost
Struggled to win my soul from sullen shame
And lift my eyes through sacrificial tears,
But though I proudly paid the crucial cost
I wept for Love's dear sake and Love's fair fame
And died again before lost Love's arrears.

WHICH ?

WE ask that Love shall rise to the divine,
And yet we crave him very human, too;
Our hearts would drain the crimson of his wine,
Our souls despise him if he prove untrue!
Poor Love! I hardly see what you can do!
We know all human things are weak and frail,
And yet we claim that very part of you,
Then, inconsistent, blame you if you fail.
When you would soar, 'tis we who clip your wings,
Although we weep because you faint and fall.
Alas! it seems we want so many things,
That no dear love could ever grant them all!
Which shall we choose, the human, or divine,
The crystal stream, or yet the crimson wine?

IN PRISON

SHE is a murderess? Nay, it is not true—
Such eyes, such gentle eyes, such loving eyes,
And then her smile—it is so gentle, too.
You held her poor hard hands, and spoke to her
In tender tones, as mother to a child,
And she, with quick-caught breath, cried: “Anna’s
good;
So good, dear lady, always as you wish.”
And with those same adoring, pleading eyes
She seemed to drink your kind, protecting smile.
We gave her flowers, gay with Autumn sun,
That we had plucked in freedom, and the thought
Stabbed in my heart. She murmured little words,
In that soft tongue that poets love so well,
And pressed the blossoms to her patient breast.
So then we left her by her grated cell,
Hearing the prison door with dubious clang
Swing back behind us. Oh! the sunset light
Never had colors that were so divine,

Never was riotous wind so fresh and free,
And the pale moon was shining dimly, too,
As though fair nature held high carnival
Of all her beauty; lavish in her gifts
That we might know the contrast of our joy
To that poor inarticulate sister's fate.
A murderess? Then you told me—and the tale
Sent the hot blood in torrents to my head
Until my eyes were blinded with her pain.
They had been boy and girl in Italy,
Had danced and sung together by the shore,
And she was always his, had never known
Father or mother, and the priest had smiled
Because their pennies were too few to give
That he should bind them with a marriage vow!
But she was her Luigi's, he was hers—
And when his gay, adventurous spirit willed,
She followed him to this far land of ours—
“We think we find much gold, and make our home,”
She said, and then a glory swept her face.
She told of how he worked, and every day
She brought with her own hands—ah! patient
toil—
The stones with which to build the little house.
And so it grew with all the long, hard days

Till one Spring morning, lo ! the home was done.
She was so tired that her eyes were dim,
Her once straight body twisted out of shape
With heavy loads, but all her heart was glad—
Now it was done and she could rest awhile.
And then he came. Looking her in the eyes,
Laughing, he said: "This home is not for you—
You are grown old and ugly—Anna, go—
A fair young girl will share this home with me."
Dumb, like a stricken dog, she turned and went—
He was Luigi, and she must obey !
She hardly knew what happened after that,
She had not died, it is so hard to die—
Yes, she had worked and earned her daily bread—
And days went by—days pass when souls are
dead—
Just as they pass when hearts are full of song—
And so a laggard year dragged to its close.
The Spring had come again—the gracious Spring !
When all the earth is redolent with joy—
And happiness the birthright of each heart.
Ah ! but the Spring has bitter pain for one
Who dreads its coming, fears the long sweet days
Fashioned for bursting blossoms and for love.
All suddenly she came to life again—

She, who had died that day the year before.
Her home, the little home her hands had made,
Surely it could not hurt Luigi if
She looked once more at what her toil had
wrought!

Her hurrying feet could hardly carry her,
So eager was she. In her weary brain
There was no thought of evil, only thirst,
For that sweet past consumed her like a flame.—
There was the porch, and on it was a girl,
Young as she once had been, with curling hair
Falling on cheek and breast, and in her arms
A dark-eyed baby clinging to that breast;
She leaned across the railing and she laughed—
Luigi, too, had laughed a year ago!—
And laughing, called in shrill and taunting tones:
“You are the woman that Luigi kept
Until you grew too old—you had no child
To bind his love. Look what I’ve given him.”
She laughed again; mocking, she held the babe
As though to give it into Anna’s arms—
Those arms that knew Luigi’s, and had clung
In love’s first ecstasy around his neck
In primitive passion. Now that love, betrayed,
Called on the savage that is in us all,

Caught at her broken heart, her blazing brain—
A flash of steel, and the dread deed was done—
What wonder? Ah, the pity of it all!

Twelve years of prison, did you say, twelve years
Have passed already in that little cell?
A life-long sentence, but commuted now,
Because of good behavior? Ah! those eyes—
Such tender, quiet, sad, beseeching eyes—
Eyes of a murderess! And the man is free!

GOD'S FAIR WORLD

IN some old book I read a legend quaint
Of one who wandered from the haunts of men,
One who had sinned and suffered, turned a saint—
He never looked upon their like again.

His eyes drawn inward, shriving his sad soul
By counting over the monotonous bead,
He put away the joy of nature's whole—
Musing upon his own poor, trivial deed.

Nor would he look upon the glad sun rise
Shedding a hope reborn adown the day,
He dared not glory in the sunset skies
But ever turned his eyes within, to pray.

Year after year behind his narrow wall
In garb of monk with crucifix on breast,
His head averted from the sight of all,
He built his pathway to eternal rest.

And when his time was come, with faith assured
He met his hour with longing satisfied,
Content that God should know what he endured;
Alone as he had lived, alone he died.

Swift to the gate of Heaven, the legend ran,
His soul was wafted. Peter, at the gate,
Spake but this word, "Loved you your fellow
man?"

And led him to the throne where suppliants wait.

And there, so runs the tale, the God of Love
In majesty upon his throne empearled
Leaned to the saint and said, from heights above:
"What did you think, O man, of my fair world?"

Kneeling, the saint turned sinner, humbly prayed:
"O Lord, my selfish eyes were blind with pain;
I knew not your fair world; I was afraid—
Grant me to serve my fellow man again!"

GETHSEMANE

ALONE we kneel in our Gethsemane
And blame our brother that he watcheth not!
We crave not him but drain his sympathy,
All but our own fierce grief have we forgot.
We cry, "Canst thou not watch with us one hour?"
And, yet, aloof, we bow, a thing apart.
Grief-scarred, we have nor wish, nor will, nor power
To clasp our brother to our bleeding heart.
He who was closest may not reach the soul,
Shrouded and veiled, by anguish felled and slain;
How can he watch, unfainting, when the whole
That once was his responds to naught but pain?
We blame our brother, yet it is not he,
But our dead heart that makes Gethsemane!

SPRING AND GRIEF

I SEE my love in every little child
Whose eyes meet mine with laughter in their
blue;
I hear him in the note, half sweet, half wild,
When bird calls bird their promise to renew;
I feel him in the ardor of the sun
That woos the fragrance from the waking flower,
And maple buds, rose flushed by beauty, won
To swift fulfilment of the Sun God's power.
The world is young once more as he was young,
With life and love reborn in everything—
O singing hearts! My own is faint and wrung;
The rapture and the riot of the Spring
Can but enhance the throb of my despair—
I miss him most when joy is everywhere!

AUTUMN AND GRIEF

THE short dark day, the chill of sombre skies,
Are far less poignant to my brooding heart
Than Spring with all her pregnant mysteries,
And promises in which he has no part.
Autumn is kind to one whose soul must weep,
While radiant Spring with callous cruelty
Awakens every longing that would sleep,
To stir once more the joy that was to be.
Autumn! You are the healer, for in truth
You seem to say, all things must change and die.
Spring slays me with the memory of his youth,
Cheats me with happiness that passed me by—
But Autumn murmurs, with pale lips and cold,
“Death alone spares us, for we soon grow old!”

MOTHERHOOD

I SOMETIMES think because at first I shrank,
And in my girlish heart rebelled, that I
Should face again the long and weary months,
'Twas just for that as well as other things
That when he came I could not love enough.
But long before the day my doubt had passed,
The child had leaped within me and I knew
The sweet and holy joy of sacred things.
And so my hour came, and, fierce and long,
I battled for his life in agony,
A wheel of fire in my shattered back
And all my being crucified with pain.
Then suddenly, as though by earthquake rent,
The world went black with torture, and I knew
That my cry mingled with another's cry
So faint I hardly heard, and yet I thrilled
To know the anguish gone, because once more
A man child had been born to this strange earth.

There, as I lay, exhausted, I rejoiced
That I had known the whole, each primal pang
That any squaw might feel beneath the bush—
That I had proved myself what women were
Who brought the pioneers into the world,
The virile men who conquered wood and plain,
For I had never murmured till the last
Great wrench of nature brought my body's fruit.
Perchance because of all this poignancy,
I loved him with a love so deep and strong
As though 'twere born of elemental things;
But then, I lay within the darkened room
Content to float upon a seeming mist,
So very quiet, almost in a dream—
The calm and placid days slipped softly by,
Those days of sweet seclusion, when the world
Seemed very far away, when even love,
Except the love I bore my little one,
Was quite a thing apart, though hovering near
And guarding me from care, a loyal shield
That locked my chamber door to all but peace.
So still I lay, till he would come to me;
Then I would hold him closely to my breast
Against the sheltered haven of my heart,
And feel that God was in His Heaven high.

Sometimes I took him in my happy arms
And scanned the little face and touched the hair,
The fair soft hair, and looked into the eyes
That were my father's in their shining blue—
One of my father's race, ah! it was so—
For as he grew to childhood I could see
The very traits I loved, the joy of life,
The gay, bright heart, the sweet simplicity,
The love and courage and the fierce contempt
For one who could be cruel to the weak—
And even as he grew my passion grew,
For we were one in heart and very soul—
His spirit lifted me, and all my sky
Was filled with light if he were only near.
Life seemed so sweet for him, and so for me
With every perfect thing that it could bring.

But suddenly, a bolt from out the blue
Fell, and my heart was dead, for he was dead!
The pangs I suffered when I gave him birth
Were only in my weak and pliant flesh,
But when he died it was my heart was torn,
My passionate heart that seemed a living thing,
That loved with love that was affinity—
The one affinity that cannot fail.

Just as the world went black when he was born,
So blacker far it went when he was dead,
For my strong heart was shattered by the blow.
Thus, though I know that I have many joys,
And though I greet the beauty of the Spring,
And welcome Summer with its golden days,
The glory is departed from the earth
Because he is not part of this same Spring,
Because the Summer and its golden days
Can never more be seen through his dear eyes.
And though the Autumn with its rich red glow
Awakens a response within my breast,
I cannot laugh as once I laughed with him,
When riding neck and neck across the hills
Into the glory of the dying day!
Ah! no, the chill of Winter holds me fast,
For he was the fair flower of my youth.
But even with the anguish that is mine,
I could not wish that it should ever pass,
For it is but the other side of joy,
And I must meet it as I met the pangs
Of that fierce birth that brought me my delight —
The essence of the part that is divine,
The perfect joy of perfect motherhood.

AFTER

I HAVE lived and rejoiced in the living,
I have loved and accepted the pain,
I have given for joy of the giving
And counted the gift as a gain—
Like music that melts into laughter,
And laughter that trembles to tears,
I have waked every chord—but hereafter
How mute are the years!

They are dim with the fear of forgetting,
And numb with a joy that is cold,
They are wan from a sun that is setting,
And blank as a tale that is told.
No thrill in the rush of the river,
No throb in the hush of the seas,
In the wound of Grief's guarding, no quiver,
For drained are Life's lees!

FEAR

BEAST in the jungle, ready, crouched to spring;
The spawn of sorrow, and the price of pain;
Lurking in shadow, dark and evil thing,
Waiting to claim my craven heart again.

Grief slew my joy, and bore it far away,
And left me in its place this barren blight
That turns the gold of morning to the gray
And haunting terror of the murky night;

Fear that the ones I love shall anguish too,
Fear for the heart red-hot, the heart turned cold,
Fear of the grief, the blinding grief I knew,
Fear of the shortening day, the years grown old.

God of my Fathers, from thy throne above,
Lean in thy tenderness, and draw me near,—
Teach me, O gracious Lord, the perfect love,—
The perfect love that casteth out all fear!

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